THE STORY OF THE WAFFEN SS

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am asked to talk to you about the great unknown of World War Two: the Waffen SS.

It is somewhat amazing that the organization which was both political and military and which during World War Two united more than one million fighting volunteers, should still be officially ignored.

Why?.

Why is it that the official record still virtually ignores this extraordinary army of volunteers? An army which was at the vortex of the most gigantic struggle, affecting the entire world.

The answer may well be found in the fact that the most striking feature of the Waffen SS was that it was composed of volunteers from some thirty different countries.

What cause gathered them and why did they volunteer their lives?

Was it a German phenomenon?

At the beginning, yes.

Initially, the Waffen SS amounted to less than two hundred members. It grew consistently until 1940 when it evolved into a second phase: the Germanic Waffen SS. In addition to Germans from Germany, northwestern Europeans and descendants of Germans from all across Europe enlisted.

Then, in 1941 during the great clash with the Soviet Union, rose the European Waffen SS. Young men from the most distant countries fought together on the Russian front.

No one knew anything about the Waffen SS for most of the years preceding the war. The Germans themselves took some time to recognize the distinctiveness of the Waffen SS.

Hitler rose to the chancellorship democratically, winning at the ballot box. He ran electoral campaigns like any other politician. He addressed meetings, advertised on billboards, his message attracted capacity audiences. More and more people liked what he had to say and more and more people voted members of his party into congress. Hitler did not come to power by force but was duly elected by the people and duly installed as Chancellor by the President of Germany, General von Hindenburg. His government was legitimate and democratic. In fact, only two of his followers were included in the Cabinet.

Later he succeeded always through the electoral process in increasing his majority. When some elections gave him up to 90% of the vote, Hitler earned every vote on his own merit.

During his campaigns Hitler faced formidable enemies: the power establishment who had no qualms whatsoever in tampering with the electoral process. He had to face the Weimar establishment and its well-financed left-wing and liberal parties and highly organized bloc of six million Communist Party members. Only the most fearless and relentless struggle to convince people to vote for him, enabled Hitler to obtain a democratic majority.

In those days the Waffen SS was not even a factor. There was, of course, the SA with some three million men. They were rank and file members of the National Socialist Workers Party but certainly not an army.

Their main function was to protect party candidates from Communist violence. And the violence was murderous indeed: more than five hundred National Socialists were murdered by the communists. Thousands were grievously injured.

The SA was a volunteer, non-government organization and as soon as Hitler rose to power he could no longer avail himself of its help.

He had to work within the system he was elected to serve.

He came in a state of disadvantage. He had to contend with an entrenched bureaucracy appointed by the old regime. In fact, when the war started in 1939, 70% of German bureaucrats had been appointed by the old regime and did not belong to Hitler's party. Hitler could not count on the support of the Church hierarchy. Both big business and the Communist Party were totally hostile to his programs. On top of all this, extreme poverty existed and six million workers were unemployed. No country in Europe had ever known so many people to be out of work.

So here is a man quite isolated. The three million SA party members are not in the government. They vote and help win the elections but they cannot supplant the entrenched bureaucracy in the government posts. The SA also was unable to exert influence on the army, because the top brass, fearful of competition, was hostile to the SA.

This hostility reached such a point that Hitler was faced with a wrenching dilemma. What to do with the millions of followers who helped him to power? He could not abandon them.

The army was a highly organized power structure. Although only numbering 100,000 as dictated by the Treaty of Versailles it exerted great influence in the affairs of state. The President of Germany was Field Marshal von Hindenburg. The army was a privileged caste. Almost all the officers belonged to the upper classes of society.

It was impossible for Hitler to take on the powerful army frontally. Hitler was elected democratically and he could not do what Stalin did: to have firing squads execute the entire military establishment. Stalin killed thirty thousand high ranking officers. That was Stalin's way to make room for his own trusted commissars.

Such drastic methods could not occur in Germany and unlike Stalin, Hitler was surrounded by international enemies.

His election had provoked international rage. He had gone to the voters directly without the intermediary of the establishment parties. His party platform included an appeal for racial purity in Germany as well as a return of power to the people. Such tenets so infuriated world Jewry that in 1933 it officially declared war on Germany.

Contrary to what one is told Hitler had limited power and was quite alone. How this man ever survived these early years defy comprehension. Only the fact that Hitler was an exceptional genius explains his survival against all odds. Abroad and at home Hitler had to bend over backwards just to demonstrate his good will.

But despite all his efforts Hitler was gradually being driven into a corner. The feud between the SA and the army was coming to a head. His old comrade, Ernst Roehm, Chief of the SA wanted to

follow Stalin's example and physically eliminate the army brass. The showdown resulted in the death of Roehm, either by suicide or murder, and many of his assistants, with the army picking up the pieces and putting the SA back in its place.

At this time the only SS to be found in Germany were in Chancellor Hitler's personal guard: one hundred eighty men in all. They were young men of exceptional qualities but without any political role. Their duties consisted of guarding the Chancellory and presenting arms to visiting dignitaries.

It was from this miniscule group of 180 men that a few years later would spring an army of a million soldiers. An army of unprecedented valor extending its call throughout Europe.

After Hitler was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of the army he realized that the brass would never support his revolutionary social programs. It was an army of aristocrats.

Hitler was a man of the people, a man who succeeded in wiping out unemployment, a feat unsurpassed to this day. Within two years he gave work to six million Germans and got rid of rampant poverty. In five years the German worker doubled his income without inflation. Hundreds of thousands of beautiful homes were built for workers at a minimal cost. Each home had a garden to grow flowers and vegetables. All the factories were provided with sport fields, swimming pools and attractive and decent workshops.

For the first time paid vacations were created. The communists and capitalists had never offered paid vacations; this was Hitler's creation. He organized the famous "strength through joy" programs which meant that workers could, at affordable prices, board passenger ships and visit any part of the world.

All these social improvements did not please the establishment. Big business tycoons and international bankers were worried. But Hitler stood up to them. Business can make profits but only if people are paid decently and are allowed to live and work in dignity. People, not profits, come first.

This was only one of Hitler's reforms. He initiated hundreds of others. He literally rebuilt Germany. In a few years more than five thousand miles of freeways were built. For the worker the affordable Volkswagen was created. Any worker could get this car on a payment of five marks a week. It was unprecedented in Europe. Thanks to the freeways the worker for the first time could visit any part of Germany whenever they liked. The same programs applied to the farmers and middle class.

Hitler realized that if his social reforms were to proceed free of sabotage he needed a powerful lever, a lever that commanded respect.

Hitler still did not confront the army but skillfully started to build up the SS. He desperately needed the SS because above all Hitler was a political man; to him war was the last resort. His aim was to convince people, to obtain their loyalty, particularly the younger generation. He knew that the establishment-minded brass would oppose him at every turn.

And he was right. Through the high ranking officers the establishment plotted the overthrow of the democratically elected Hitler government. Known as the Munich Plot, the conspirators were detected in time. That was in 1938.

On 20 July 1944, Hitler almost lost his life when aristocratic officers planted a time bomb underneath his desk.

In order not to alert the army Hitler enlarged the SS into a force responsible for law and order. There was of course a German police force but there again Hitler was unsure of their loyalty. The 150,000 police were appointed by the Weimar regime. Hitler needed the SS not only to detect plots but mostly to protect his reforms. As his initial Leibstandarte unit of 180 grew, other regiments were found such as the Deutschland and the Germania.

The army brass did everything to prevent SS recruitment. Hitler bypassed the obstacles by having the interior minister and not the war ministry do the recruiting.

The army countered by discouraging the recruitment of men between the ages of 18 and 45. On the ground of national defense, privates were ordered to serve four years, non-commissioned officers twelve and officers twenty-five years.

Such orders, it was thought, would stop SS recruitment dead in its tracks. The reverse happened. Thousands of young men rushed to apply, despite the lengthy service, more than could be accepted.

The young felt the SS was the only armed force which represented their own ideas.
The new formations of young SS captivated public imagination. Clad in smart black uniforms the SS attracted more and more young men.

It took two years from 1933 to 1935 and a constant battle of wits with the army to raise a force of 8,000 SS.

At the time the name Waffen SS did not even exist. It was not until 1940, after the French campaign, that the SS will be officially named "Waffen SS." In 1935 they were called just SS. However, 8,000 SS did not go far in a country of 80 million people. And Hitler had yet to devise another way to get around the army. He created the Totenkopf guard corps. They were really SS in disguise but their official function was to guard the concentration camps.

What were these concentration camps?

They were just work camps where intractable communists were put to work. They were well treated because it was thought they would be converted sooner or later to patriotism. There were two concentration camps with a total of three thousand men. Three thousand out of a total of six million card-carrying members of the Communist Party. That represents one per two thousand. Right until the war there were fewer than ten thousand inmates.

So the Totenkopf ploy produced four regiments. At the right moment they will join the SS. The Totenkopf kept a low profile through an elaborate system of recruiting reserves in order to keep its strength inconspicuous.

At the beginning of the war the Totenkopf numbered 40,000 men. They will be sent to 163 separate units. Meanwhile the initial Leibstandarte regiment reached 2800 and a fourth regiment was formed in Vienna at the time of the Anschluss.

The young men who joined the SS were trained like no other army in the world. Military and academic instruction were intensive, but it was the physical training that was the most rigorous. They practice sports with excellence. Each of them would have performed with distinction at the Olympic games. The extraordinary physical endurance of the SS on the Russian front, which so amazed the world, was due to this intensive training.

There was also the ideological training. They were taught why they were fighting, what kind of Germany was being resurrected before their very eyes. They were shown how Germany was being morally united through class reconciliation and physically united through the return of the lost German homelands. They were made aware of their kinship with all the other Germans living in foreign lands, in Poland, Russia, the Sudentenland and other parts of Europe. They were taught that all Germans represented an ethnic unity.

Young SS were educated in two military academies, one in Bad Toelz the other in Braunschweig. These academies were totally different from the grim barracks of the past. Combining aesthetics with the latest technology they were located in the middle of hundreds of acres of beautiful country.

Hitler was opposed to any war, particularly in Western Europe. He did not even conceive that the SS could participate in such a war. Above all the SS was a political force. Hitler regarded Western countries as individual cultures which could be federated but certainly not conquered. He felt a conflict within the West would be a no-win civil war.

Hitler's conception of Europe then was far ahead of his neighbors. The mentality of 1914-1918, when small countries fought other small countries over bits of real estate, still prevailed in the Europe

of 1939. Not so in the case of the Soviet Union where internationalism replaced nationalism. The communists never aimed at serving the interests of Russia. Communism does not limit itself to acquire chunks of territories but aims at total world domination.

This is a dramatically new factor. This policy of world conquest is still being carried out today whether in Viet Nam, Afganistan, Africa or Poland. At the time it was an entirely new concept. Alone among all the leaders of the world Hitler saw this concept as an equal threat to all nations.

Hitler recalled vividly the havoc the communists unleashed in Germany at the end of World War One. Particularly in Berlin and Bavaria the Communists under foreign orders organized a state within a state and almost took over. For Hitler, everything pointed East. The threat was Communism.

Apart from his lack of interest in subjugating Western Europe, Hitler was well aware he could not wage war on two fronts.

At this point instead of letting Hitler fight Communism the Allies made the fateful decision to attack Hitler.

The socalled Western Democracies allied themselves with the Soviet Union for the purpose of encircling and destroying the democratic government of Germany.

The Treaty of Versailles had already amputated Germany from all sides. It was designed to keep Germany in a state of permanent economic collapse and military impotence. The Allies had ratified a string of treaties with Belgium, the newly created Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Rumania to pressure Germany from all sides.

Now in the summer of 1939 the governments of Britain and France were secretly negotiating a full military alliance with the Soviet Union. The talks were held in Moscow and the minutes were signed by Marshal Zhukov.

I have these minutes in my possession. They are stupefying. One can read a report guaranteeing Britain and France of Soviet participation against Germany. Upon ratification the Soviet Union was to provide the Anglo-French forces with the Soviet support of 5500 combat planes immediately plus the back up of the entire Soviet air force. Between 9,000 to 10,000 tanks would also be made available. In return, the Soviet Union demanded the Baltic states and free access to Poland. The plan called for an early joint attack.

Germany was still minimally armed at that stage. The French negotiators realized that the 10,000 Soviet tanks would soon destroy the 2000 German tanks but did not see that they would be unlikely. to Stop at the French border. Likewise the British government was quite prepared to let the Soviets take over Europe.

Facing total encirclement Hitler decided once more to make his own peace with one or the other side of the Soviet-British partnership.

He turned to the British and French governments and requested formal peace talks. His quest for peace was answered by an outpouring of insults and denunciations. The international press went on an orgy of hate against Hitler unprecedented in history. It is mind-boggling to re-read these newspapers today.

When Hitler made similar peace overtures to Moscow he was surprised to find the Soviets eager to sign a peace treaty with Germany. In fact, Stalin did not sign a peace treaty for the purpose of peace. He signed to let Europe destroy itself in a war of attrition while giving him the time he needed to build up his military strength.

Stalin's real intent is revealed in the minutes of the Soviet High Command, also in my possession. Stalin states his intent to come into the war the moment Hitler and the Western powers have annihilated each other. Stalin had great interest in marking time and letting others fight first. I have read his military plans and I have seen how they were achieved. By 1941 Stalin's ten thousand tanks

had increased to 17,999, the next year they would have been 32,000, ten times more than Germany's. The air force would also have been 10 to 1 in Stalin's favor.

The very week Stalin signed the peace treaty with Hitler he gave orders to build 96 air fields on the Western Soviet border, 180 were planned for the following year. His strategy was constant: "The more the Western powers fight it out the weaker they will be. The longer I wait the stronger I get." It was under these appalling circumstances that World War Two started. A war which was offered to the Soviets on a silver platter.

Aware of Stalin's preparations Hitler knew he would have to face communism sooner rather than later. And to fight communism he had to rely on totally loyal men, men who would fight for an ideology against another ideology. It had always been Hitler's policy to oppose the ideology of class war with an ideology of class cooperation.

Hitler had observed that Marxist class war had not brought prosperity to the Russian people. Russian workers were poorly clothed, as they are now, badly housed, badly fed. Goods are always in short supply and to this day, housing in Moscow is as nightmarish as it was before the war. For Hitler the failure of class war made class cooperation the only just alternative. To make it work Hitler saw to it that one class would not be allowed to abuse the other.

It is a fact that the newly rich classes emerging from the industrial revolution had enormously abused their privileges and it was for this reason that the National Socialists were socialists.

National Socialism was a popular movement in the truest sense. The great majority of National Socialists were blue collars. 70% of the Hitler Youth were children of blue collar workers. Hitler won the elections because the great mass of workers were solidly behind him. One often wonders why six million communists who had voted against Hitler, turned their back on Communism after Hitler had been elected in 1933. There is only one reason: they witnessed and experienced the benefits of class cooperation. Some say they were forced to change; it is not true. Like other loyal Germans they fought four years on the Russian Front with distinction.

The workers never abandoned Hitler, but the upper classes did. Hitler spelled out his formula of class cooperation as the answer to communism with these words: "Class cooperation means that capitalists will never again treat the workers as mere economic components. Money is but one part of our economic life, the workers are more than machines to whom one throws a pay packet every week. The real wealth of Germany is its workers."

Hitler replaced gold with work as the foundation of his economy. National Socialism was the exact opposite of Communism. Extraordinary achievements, followed Hitler's election.

We always hear about Hitler and the camps, Hitler and the Jews, but we never hear about his immense social work. If so much hatred was generated against Hitler by the international bankers and the servile press it was because of his social work. It is obvious that a genuine popular movement like National Socialism was going to collide with the selfish interest of high finance. Hitler made clear that the control of money did not convey the right of rapacious exploitation of an entire country because there are also people living in the country, millions of them, and these people have the right to live with dignity and without want. What Hitler said and practiced had won over the German youth. It was this social revolution that the SS felt compelled to spread throughout Germany and defend with their lives if need be.

The 1939 war in Western Europe defied all reason. It was a civil war among those who should have been united. It was a monstrous stupidity.

The young SS were trained to lead the new National Socialist revolution. In five or ten years they were to replace all those who had been put in office by the former regime.

But at the beginning of the war it was not possible for these young men to stay home. Like the other young men in the country they had to defend their country and they had to defend it better than the others.

The war turned the SS from a home political force to a national army fighting abroad and then to a supranational army.

We are now at the beginning of the war in Poland with its far reaching consequences. Could the war have been avoided? Emphatically yes! Even after it had moved into Poland.

The Danzig conflict was inconsequential. The Treaty of Versailles had separated the German city of Danzig from Germany and given it to Poland against the wish of its citizens.

This action was so outrageous that it had been condemned all over the world. A large section of Germany was sliced through the middle. To go from Western Prussia to Eastern Prussia one had to travel in a sealed train through Polish territory. The citizens of Danzig had voted 99% to have their city returned to Germany. Their right of self-determination had been consistently ignored.

However, the war in Poland started for reasons other than Danzig's self-determination or even Poland's.

Poland just a few months before had attacked Czechoslovakia at the same time Hitler had returned the Sudetenland to Germany. The Poles were ready to work with Hitler. If Poland turned against Germany it is because the British government did everything in its power to poison German-Polish relations.

Why? .

Much has to do with a longstanding inferiority complex British rulers have felt towards Europe. This complex has manifested itself in the British Establishment's obsession in keeping Europe weak through wars and dissension.

At the time the British Empire controlled 500 million human beings outside of Europe but somehow it was more preoccupied with its traditional hobby: sowing dissension in Europe. This policy of never allowing the emergence of a strong European country has been the British Establishment's modus operandi for centuries.

Whether it was Charles the Fifth of Spain, Louis the Fourteenth or Napoleon of France or William the Second of Germany, the British Establishment never tolerated any unifying power in Europe. Germany never wanted to meddle in British affairs. However, the British Establishment always made it a point to meddle in European affairs, particularly in Central Europe and the Balkans.

Hitler's entry into Prague brought the British running to the fray. Prague and Bohemia had been part of Germany for centuries and always within the German sphere of influence. British meddling in this area was totally unjustified.

For Germany the Prague regime represented a grave threat. Benes, Stalin's servile Czech satrap, had been ordered by his Kremlin masters to open his borders to the Communist armies at a moment's notice. Prague was to be the Soviet springboard to Germany.

For Hitler, Prague was a watchtower to central Europe and an advance post to delay a Soviet invasion. There were also Prague's historical economic links with Germany. Germany has always had economic links with Central Europe. Rumania, the Balkans, Bulgaria, Hungary and Yugoslavia have had longstanding complimentary economies with Germany which have functioned to this day.

Hitler's European economic policy was based on common sense and realism. And it was Hitler's emerging Central European Common Market rather than concern for Czech freedom that the British Establishment could not tolerate.

Yet English people felt great admiration for Hitler. I remember when Lloyd George addressed the German press outside Hitler's home, where he had just been a guest. He stated: "You can thank God you have such a wonderful man as your leader!" Lloyd George, the enemy of Germany during World War One, said that!

King Edward the Eighth of England who had just abdicated and was now the Duke of Windsor also came to see Hitler at his Berchtesgaden home, accompanied by his wife, who incidentally had been used to force his abdication. Whey they returned the Duke sent a wire to Hitler. It read: "What a wonderful day we have spent with your Excellency. Unforgettable!" The Duke reflected what many English people knew, remarking on: "how well off the German workers were." The Duke was telling the truth. The German worker earned twice as much, without inflation, as he did before Hitler and consequently his standard of living was high.

Even Churchill, the most fanatic German-hater of them all, had in 1938, a year before the war, sent a letter to Hitler in which he wrote: "If ever Great Britain was plunged into a disaster comparable to the one that afflicted Germany in 1918 I would ask God that He should send us a man with the strength and the character of your Excellency."

The London Times reported this extraordinary statement.

Friend or foe, all acknowledge that Hitler was a man of exceptional genius. His achievements were the envy of the world. In five short years he rebuilt a bankrupt nation burdened with millions of unemployed into the strongest economic power in Europe. It was so strong that the small country that was Germany was able to withstand a war against the whole world for six years.

Churchill acknowledged that no one in the world could match such a feat. He stated just before the war: "there is no doubt we can work out a peace formula with Hitler." But Churchill received other instructions. The Establishment, fearful that Hitler's successes in Germany could spread to other countries, was determined to destroy him. It created hatred against Germany across Europe by stirring old grievances. It also exploited the envy some Europeans felt toward Germany.

The Germans' high birth rate had made Germany the most populous country in Western Europe. In science and technology Germany was ahead of both France and Britain. Hitler had built Germany into an economic powerhouse. That was Hitler's crime and the British Establishment opted to destroy Hitler and Germany by any means.

The British manipulated the Polish government against Germany. The Poles themselves were more than willing to live in peace with the Germans. Instead, the unfortunate Poles were railroaded into war by the British. One must not forget that one and a half million Germans lived in Poland at the time, at great benefit to the Polish economy. Apart from economic ties with Germany, the Poles saw a chance that with Germany's help they would be able to recover their Polish territories from the Soviet Union, territories they had tried to recover in vain since 1919.

In January 1939 Hitler had proposed to Beck, the Polish leader, a compromise to solve the Danzig issue: The Danziger's vote to return to Germany would be honored and Poland would continue to have free port access and facilities, guaranteed by treaty.

The prevailing notion of the day that every country must have a sea port really does not make sense. Switzerland, Hungary and other countries with no sea ports manage quite well. Hitler's proposals were based on the principles of self-determination and reciprocity. Even Churchill admitted that such a solution could dispose of the Danzig problem. This admission, however, did not prevent him to sent an ultimatum to Germany: withdrawal from Poland or war. The world has recently seen what happened when Israel invaded Lebanon. Heavily populated cities like Tyre and Sidon were destroyed and so was West Beirut. Everybody called for Israel's withdrawal but no one declared war on Israel when it refused to budge.

With a little patience a peaceful solution would have been found Danzig. Instead, the international press unleashed a massive campaign of outright lies and distortions against Hitler. His proposals were willfully misrepresented by a relentless press onslaught.

Of all the crimes of World War Two, one never hears about the wholesale massacres that occurred in Poland just before the war. I have detailed reports in my files documenting the mass slaughter of defenseless Germans in Poland.

Thousands of German men, women and children were massacred in the most horrendous fashion by Press-enraged mobs. The photographs of these massacres are too sickening to look at! Hitler decided to halt the slaughter and he rushed to the rescue.

The Polish campaign showed Hitler to be a military genius. History had already started to recognize this most startling of Hitler's characteristics: his rare military genius. All the successful military campaigns of the Third Reich were thought out and directed by Hitler personally, not the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hitler inspired a number of generals who became his most able executives in later campaigns.

In regard to the Polish campaign the General Staff had planned an offensive along the Baltic coastline in order to take Danzig, a plan logistically doomed to failure. Instead, Hitler invented the Blitzkrieg or lightning war and in no time captured Warsaw. The Waffen SS appeared on the Polish Front and its performance amazed the world.

The second campaign in France was also swift and humane. The British-French forces had rushed to Holland and Belgium to check the German advance, but they were outwitted and outflanked in Sedan. It was all over in a matter of days.

The story goes that Hitler had nothing to do with this operation; that it was all the work of General von Manstein. That is entirely false. Marshall von Manstein had indeed conceived the idea but when he submitted it to the joint Chiefs of Staff he was reprimanded, demoted and retired to Dresden. The General Staff had not brought this particular incident to Hitler's attention. On his own, Hitler ran a campaign along the same lines and routed the British-French forces. It was not until March 1940 that von Manstein came into contact with Hitler.

Hitler also planned the Balkan and Russian campaigns. On the rare occasions where Hitler allowed the General Staff to have their way, such as in Kursk, the battle was lost.

In the 1939 Polish campaign Hitler did not rely on military textbook theories devised fifty years ago, as advocated by the General Staff, but on his own plan of swift, pincer-like encirclement. In eight days the Polish war was won and over in spite of the fact that Poland is as large as France.

The eight day campaign saw three SS regiments in action: The Leibstandarte, the Deutschland and the Germania. There was also an SS motorbike battalion, a corps of engineers and a transmission unit. In all it was a comprehensive but small force of 25,000 men.

Sepp Dietriech and his Leibstandarte alone had, after bolting out of Silesia, split Poland in half within days. With less than 3,000 men he had defeated a Polish force of 15,000 and taken 10,000 prisoners. Such victories were not achieved without loss.

It is hard to imagine that from a total of one million SS, 352,000 were killed in action with 50,000 more missing. It is a grim figure! Four hundred thousand of the finest young men in Europe! Without hesitation they sacrificed themselves for their beliefs. They knew they had to give an example. They were the first on the front line as a way to defend their country and their ideals.

In victory or defeat the Waffen SS always sought to be the best representatives of their people. The SS was a democratic expression of power: people gathering of their own free will.

The consent of the ballot box is not only this; there is consent of the heart and the mind of men. In action, the Waffen SS made a plebiscite: that the German people should be proud of them, should give them their respect and their love. Such high motivation made the volunteers of the Waffen SS the best fighters in the world.

The SS had proved themselves in action. They were not empty talking politicians, but they gave their lives, the first to go and fight in an extraordinary spurt of comradeship. This comradeship was one of the most distinctive characteristics of the SS: the SS leader was the comrade of the others.

It was on the front lines that the results of the SS physical training could really be noticed. An SS officer had the same rigorous training as the soldiers. Those officers and privates competed in the

same sports events, and only the best man won, regardless of rank. This created a real brotherhood which literally energized the entire Waffen SS. Only the teamwork of free men, bonded by a higher ideal could unite Europe. Look at the Common Market of today. It is a failure. There is no unifying ideal. Everything is based on haggling over the price of tomatoes, steel, coal, or booze. Fruitful unions are based on something a little higher than that.

The relationship of equality and mutual respect between soldiers and officers was always present. Half of all division commanders were killed in action. Half! There is not an army in the world where this happened. The SS officer always led his troops to battle. I was engaged in seventy-five hand-to-hand combats because as an SS officer I had to be the first to meet the enemy. SS soldiers were not sent to slaughter by behind-the-line officers, they followed their officers with passionate loyalty. Every SS commander knew and taught all his men, and often received unexpected answers.

After breaking out of Tcherkassy's siege I talked with all my soldiers one-by-one, there were thousands at the time. For two weeks every day from dawn to dusk, I asked them questions, and heard their replies. Sometimes it happens that some soldiers who brag a little, receive medals, while others - heroes - who keep quiet, miss out. I talked to all of them because I wanted to know first-hand what happened, and what they had done. To be just I had to know the truth.

It was on this occasion that two of my soldiers suddenly pulled their identity cards from the Belgian Resistance Movement. They had been sent to kill me. At the front line, it is very simple to shoot someone in the back. But the extraordinary SS team spirit had won them over. SS officers could expect loyalty of their men by their example.

The life expectancy of an SS officer at the front was three months. In Estonia I received ten new young officers from Bad Toelz academy one Monday; by Thursday, one was left and he was wounded.

In the conventional armies, officers talked at the men, from superior to inferior, and seldom as brothers in combat and brothers in ideology.

Thus, by 1939, the Waffen SS had earned general admiration and respect. This gave Hitler the opportunity to call for an increase in their numbers. Instead of regiments, there would be three divisions.

Again, the Army brass laid down draconian recruiting conditions: SS could only join for not less than four years of combat duty. The brass felt no one would take such a risk. Again, they guessed wrong. In the month of February 1940 alone, 49,000 joined the SS. From 25,000 in September 1939 there would be 150,000 in May 1940.

Thus, from 180 to 8,000 to 25,000 to 150,000 and eventually one million men, all this against all odds.

Hitler had no interest whatever in getting involved with the war in France, a war forced on him.

The 150,000 SS had to serve under the Army, and they were given the most dangerous and difficult missions. Despite the fact that they were provided with inferior hand-arms and equipment. They had no tanks. In 1940 the Leibstandarte was provided with a few scouting tanks. The SS were given wheels and that's all. But with trucks, motorbikes and varied limited means they were able to perform amazing feats.

The Leibstandarte and Der Fuehrer regiments were sent to Holland under the Leadership of Sepp Dietrich. They had to cross Dutch waterways. The Luftwaffe had dropped parachutists to hold the bridges 120 miles deep in Dutch territory, and it was vital for the SS to reach these bridges with the greatest speed.

The Leibstandarte would realize an unprecedented feat in ten days: to advance 120 miles in one day. It was unheard of at the time, and the world was staggered. At that rate German troops would reach Spain in one week. In one day the SS had crossed all the Dutch canals on. flimsy rubber rafts-. Here again, SS losses were heavy. But, thanks to their heroism and speed, the German Army

reached Rotterdam in three days. The parachutists all risked being wiped out had the SS not accomplished their lightning-thrust.

In Belgium, the SS regiment Der Fuehrer faced head on the French Army, which after falling in the Sedan trap, had rushed toward Breda, Holland. There, one would see for the first time a small motivated army route a large national army. It took one SS regiment and a number of German troops to throw the whole French Army off balance and drive it back from Breda to Antwerp, Belgium and Northern France.

The Leibstandarte and Der Fuehrer regiments jointly advanced on the large Zealand Islands, between the Escaut and Rhine rivers. In a few days they would be under control.

In no time the Leibstandarte had then crossed Belgium and Northern France. The second major battle of SS regiments occurs in concert with the Army tank division. The SS, still with their tanks, are under the command of General Rommel and General Guderian. They spearhead a thrust toward the North Sea.

Sepp Dietrich and his troops have now crossed the French canals, but are pinned down by the enemy in a mud field, and just manage to avoid extermination. But despite the loss of many soldiers, officers and one battalion commander, all killed in action, the Germans reach Dunkirk.

Hitler is very proud of them.

The following week, Hitler deploys them along the Somme River, from which they will pour out across France. There again, the SS will prove itself to be the best fighting force in the world. Sepp Dietrich and the 2nd Division of the SS, Totenkopf, advance so far so fast they they even lose contact with the rest of the Army for three days.

They found themselves in Lyon, France, a city they had to leave after the French-German peace treaty.

Sepp Dietrich and a handful of SS on trucks had achieved the impossible.

Der Fuehrer SS division spearheaded the Maginot Line breakthrough. Everyone had said the Line was impenetrable. The war in France was over. Hitler had the three SS divisions march through Paris. Berlin honored the heroes also. But the Army was so jealous that it would not cite a single SS for valor or bravery. It was Hitler himself who in front of the German congress solemnly paid tribute to the heroism of the SS. It was on this occasion that Hitler officially recognized the name of the Waffen SS.

But it was more than just a name-change. The Waffen SS became Germanic, as volunteers were accepted from all Germanic countries. The SS had found out by themselves that the people of Western Europe were closely related to them: the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Flemish - all belonged to the same Germanic family. These Germanic people were themselves very much impressed by the SS, and so, by the way, were the French.

The people of Western Europe had marvelled at this extraordinary German force with a style unlike any others: if two SS scouts would reach town ahead of everybody else, on motorbikes, before presenting themselves to the local authorities they would first clean themselves up so as to be of impeccable appearance. The people could not help but be impressed.

The admiration felt by young Europeans of Germanic stock for the SS was very natural. Thousands of young men from Norway, Denmark, Flanders, and Holland were awed with surprise and admiration. They felt irresistably drawn to the SS. It was not Europe, but their own Germanic race that so deeply stirred their souls. They identified with the victorious Germans. To them, Hitler was the most exceptional man ever seen. Hitler understood them, and had the remarkable idea to open the doors of the SS to them. It was quite risky. No one had ever thought of this before. Prior to Hitler, German imperialism consisted only of peddling goods to other countries, without any thought of creating an ideology called "community" - a common ideal with its neighbors.

Suddenly, instead of peddling and haggling, here was a man who offered a glorious ideal: an enthralling social justice, for which they all had yearned in vain, for years. A broad New Order, instead of the formless cosmopolitanism of the pre-war so-called "democracies." The response to Hitler's offer was overwhelming. Legions from Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Flanders were formed. Thousands of young men now wore the SS uniform. Hitler created specifically for them the famous Viking division. One destined to become one of the most formidable divisions of the Waffen SS.

The Army was still doing everything to stop men from joining the SS in Germany, and acted as though the SS did not exist. Against this background of obstructionism at home, it was normal and understandable that the SS would welcome men from outside Germany.

The Germans living abroad provided a rich source of volunteers. As there are millions of German-Americans, there are millions of Germans in all parts of Europe-in Hungary, in Rumania, in Russia. There was even a Soviet Republic of the Volga Germans. These were the descendants of Germans who had emigrated two centuries before. Other Europeans, like the French Huguenots, who went to Prussia, also shared this type of emigration with the Germans. So, Europe was dotted with German settlements. The victories of the Third Reich had made them proud of belonging to the German family. Hitler welcomed them home. He saw them, first, as a source of elite SS men, and also as an important factor in unifying all Germans ideologically.

Here again, the enthusiastic response was amazing. 300,000 volunteers of German ancestory would join, from all over Europe. 54,000 from Rumania alone. In the context of that era, these were remarkable figures. There were numerous problems to overcome. For instance, most of the Germanic volunteers no longer spoke German. Their families had settled in foreign lands for 200 years or so. In Spain, for instance, I can see the children of my legionaries being assimilated with the Spaniards - and their grandchildren no longer speak French. The Germans follow the same pattern. When the German volunteers first arrived at the SS, they spoke many different languages, had different ways and different needs.

How to find officers who could speak all these languages? How to coordinate such a disparate lot? The mastery of these problems was the miracle of the Waffen SS assimilation program. This homecoming of the separated "tribes" was seen by the Waffen SS as the foundation for real European unity. The 300,000 Germanic volunteers were welcomed by the SS as brothers, and they reciprocated by being as dedicated, loyal and heroic as the German SS.

Within the year, everything had changed for the Waffen SS The barracks were full, the academies were full. The strictest admission standards and requirements equally applied for the Germanic volunteers. They had to be the best in every way, both physically and mentally. They had to be the best of the Germanic race.

German racialism has been deliberately distorted. It never was an anti-"other race" racialism. It was a pro-German racialism. It was concerned with making the German race strong and healthy in every way. Hitler was not interested in having millions of degenerates, if it was in his power not to have them. Today one finds rampant alcohol and drug addiction everywhere. Hitler cared that the German families be healthy, cared that they raise healthy children for the renewal of a healthy nation. German racialism meant re-discovering the creative values of their own race, re-discovering their culture. It was a search for excellence, a noble idea. National Socialist racialism was not against the other races, it was for its own race. It aimed at defending and improving its race, and wished that all other races did the same for themselves.

That was demonstrated when the Waffen SS enlarged its ranks to include 60,000 Islamic SS. The Waffen SS respected their way of fife, their customs, and their religious beliefs. Each Islamic SS battalion had an imam, each company had a mullah. It was our common wish that their qualities found their highest expression. This was our racialism. I was present when each of my Islamic comrades received a personal gift from Hitler during the new year. It was a pendant with a small Koran. Hitler was honoring them with this small symbolic gift. He was honoring them with what was the most important aspect of their lives and their history. National Socialist racialism was loyal to the German race and totally respected all other races.

At this point, one hears: "What about the anti-Jewish racism?" One can answer: "What about Jewish anti-Gentilism?"

It has been the misfortune of the Jewish race that never could they get on with any other race. It is an unusual historical fact and phenomenon. When one studies the history-and I say this without any passion- of the Jewish people, their evolution across the centuries, one observes that always, at all times, and at all places, they were hated. They were hated in ancient Egypt, they were hated in ancient Greece, they were hated in Roman times to such a degree that 3,000 of them were deported to Sardine. It was the first Jewish deportation. They were hated in Spain, in France, in England (they were banned from England for centuries), and in Germany. The conscientious Jewish author Lazare wrote a very interesting book on Anti-Semitism, where he asked himself: "We Jews should ask ourselves a question: why are we always hated everywhere? It is not because of our persecutors, all of different times and places. It is because there is something within us that is very unlikeable." What is unlikeable is that the Jews have always wanted to live as a privileged class divinely-chosen and beyond scrutiny. This attitude has made them unlikeable everywhere. The Jewish race is therefore a unique case. Hitler had no intention of destroying it. He wanted the Jews to find their own identity in their own environment, but not to the detriment of others. The fight-if we can call it that-of National Socialism against the Jews was purely limited to one objective: that the Jews leave Germany in peace. It was planned to give them a country of their own, outside Germany. Madagascar was contemplated, but the plans were dropped when the United States entered the war. In the meanwhile, Hitler thought of letting the Jews five in their own traditional ghettos. They would have their own organizations, they would run their own affairs and live the way they wanted to live. They had their own police, their own tramways, their own flag, their own factories which, incidentally, were built by the German government. As far as other races were concerned, they were all welcomed in Germany as guests, but not as privileged occupants.

In one year the Waffen SS had gathered a large number of Germanic people from Northern Europe and hundreds of thousands of Germans from outside Germany, the Volksdeutsche, or Germanic SS. It was then that the conflict between Communism and National Socialism burst into the open. The conflict had always existed. In Mein Kampf, Hitler had clearly set out his objective: "to eliminate the world threat of Communism," and incidentally claim some land in Eastern Europe! This eastward expansionism created much outrage: How could the Germans claim land in Russia? To this one can answer: How could the Americans claim Indian land from the Atlantic to the Pacific? How could France claim Southern Flanders and Rousillon from Spain? And what of Britain, and what of so many other countries who have claimed, conquered and settled in other territories? Somehow at the time.it was all right for all these countries to settle foreign lands but it was not for Germany. Personally, I have always vigorously defended the Russians, and I finally did succeed in convincing Hitler that Germans had to live with Russians as partners not as conquerors. Before achieving this partnership, there was first the matter of wiping out Communism. During the Soviet-German Pact, Hitler was trying to gain time but the Soviets were intensifying their acts of aggression from Estonia to Bukovina. I now read extracts from Soviet documents. They are most revealing. Let's read from Marshal Voroshilov himself:

We now have the time to prepare ourselves to be the executioner of the capitalist world while it is agonizing. We must, however, be cautious. The Germans must not have any inkling that we are preparing to stab them in the back while they are busy fighting the French. Otherwise, they could change their general plan, and attack us.

In the same record, Marshal Choponitov wrote: "The coexistence between Hitler's Germany and the Soviet Union is only temporary. We will not make it last very long." Marshal Timoshenko, for his part, did not want to be so hasty: "Let us not forget that our war material from our Siberian factories will not be delivered until Fall." This was written at the beginning of 1941, and the material was only to be delivered in the Fall. The war industry Commisariat Report stated: We will not be in full production until 1942. Marshal Zhukov made this extraordinary admission: "Hitler is in a hurry to invade us; he has good reasons for it."

Indeed, Hitler had good reasons to invade Russia in a hurry because he realized he would be wiped out if he did not. Zhukov added: "We need a few more months to rectify many of our defects before the end of 1941. We need 18 months to complete the modernization of our forces."

The orders are quite precise. At the fourth session of the Supreme Soviet in 1939, it is decreed that Army officers will serve three years and the soldiers will serve four years, and the Navy personnel, five years. All these decisions were made less than a month after the Soviets signed the peace treaty with Germany.

Thus the Soviets, pledged to peace, were frantically preparing for war. More than 2,500 new concrete fortifications were built between 1939 and 1940. 160 divisions were made combat-ready. 60 tank divisions were on full alert. The Germans only had 10 panzer tank divisions. In 1941, the Soviets had 17,000 tanks, and by 1942 they had 32,000. They had 92,578 pieces of artillery. And their 17,545 combat planes in 1940 outnumbered the German air force.

It is easy to understand that with such war preparations going on, Hitler was left with only one option: Invade the Soviet Union immediately, or face annihilation.

Hitler's Russian campaign was the "last chance" campaign. Hitler did not go into Russia with any great optimism. He told me later on: "When I entered Russia, I was like a man facing a shut door. I knew I had to crash through it, but without knowing what was behind it." Hitler was right. He knew the Soviets were strong, but above all he knew they were going to be a lot stronger. 1941 was the only time Hitler had some respite. The British had not succeeded yet in expanding the war. Hitler, who never wanted the war with Britain, still tried for peace. He invited me to spend a week at his home. He wanted to discuss the whole situation and hear what I had to say about it. He spoke very simply and clearly. The atmosphere was informal and relaxed. He made you feel at home because he really enjoyed being hospitable. He buttered pieces of toast in a leisurely fashion, and passed them around, and although he did not drink he went to get a bottle of champagne after each meal because he knew I enjoyed a glass at the end of it. All without fuss and with genuine friendliness. It was part of his genius that he was also a man of simple ways without the slightest affection and a man of great humility. We talked about England. I asked him bluntly: "Why on earth didn't you finish the British off in Dunkirk? Everyone knew you could have wiped them out." He answered: "Yes, I withheld my troops and let the British escape back to England. The humiliation of such a defeat would have made it difficult to try for peace with them afterwards."

At the same time, Hitler told me he did not want to dispel the Soviet belief that he was going to invade England. He mentioned that he even had small Anglo-German dictionaries distributed to his troops in Poland. The Soviet spies there duly reported to the Kremlin that Germany's presence in Poland was a bluff and that they were about to leave for the British Isles.

On 22 June 1941, it was Russia and not England that Germany invaded. The initial victories were swift but costly. I lived the epic struggle of the Russian Front. It was a tragic epic; it was also martyrdom. The endless thousands of miles of the Russian steppes were overwhelming. We had to reach the Caucasus by foot, always under extreme conditions. In the summer we often walked knee-deep in mud, and in winter there were below-zero freezing temperatures. But for a matter of a few days Hitler would have won the war in Russia in 1941. Before the battle of Moscow, Hitler had succeeded in defeating the Soviet Army, and taking considerable numbers of prisoners.

General Guderian's tank division, which had all by itself encircled more than a million Soviet troops near Kiev, had reached Moscow right up to the city's tramway lines. It was then that suddenly an unbelievable freeze happened: 40, 42, 50 degrees celsius below zero! This meant that not only were men freezing, but the equipment was also freezing, on the spot. No tanks could move. Yesterday's mud had frozen to a solid block of ice, half a meter high, icing up the tank treads.

In 24 hours all of our tactical options had been reversed. It was at that time that masses of Siberian troops brought back from the Russian Far East were thrown against the Germans. These few fateful days of ice that made the difference between victory and defeat, Hitler owed to the Italian campaign in Greece during the fall of 1940.

Mussolini was envious of Hitler's successes. It was a deep and silent jealousy. I was a friend of Mussolini, I knew him well. He was a remarkable man, but Europe was not of great concern to him. He did not like to be a spectator, watching Hitler winning everywhere. He felt compelled to do something himself, fast. Impulsively, he launched a senseless offensive against Greece.

His troops were immediately defeated. But it gave the British the excuse to invade Greece, which up till now had been uninvolved in the war. From Greece the British could bomb the Rumanian oil wells, which were vital to Germany's war effort. Greece could also be used to cut off the German troops on their way to Russia. Hitler was forced to quash the threat preemptively. He had to waste five weeks in the Balkans. His victories there were an incredible logistical achievement, but they delayed the start of the Russian campaign for five critical weeks.

If Hitler had been able to start the campaign in time, as it was planned, he would have entered Moscow five weeks before, in the sun of early fall, when the earth was still dry. The war would have been over, and the Soviet Union would have been a thing of the past. The combination of the sudden freeze and the arrival of fresh Siberian troops spread panic among some of the old Army generals. They wanted to retreat to 200 miles from Moscow. It is hard to imagine such inane strategy! The freeze affected Russia equally, from West to East, and to retreat 200 miles in the open steppes would only make things worse. I was commanding my troops in the Ukraine at the time and it was 42 degrees centigrade below zero.

Such a retreat meant abandoning all the heavy artillery, including assault tanks and panzers that were stuck in the ice. It also meant exposing half a million men to heavy Soviet sniping. In fact, it meant condemning them to certain death. One need only recall Napoleon's retreat in October. He reached the Berzina River in November, and by December 6th all the French troops had left Russia. It was cold enough, but it was not a winter campaign.

Can you just imagine in 1941 half a million Germans fighting howling snowstorms, cut off from supplies, attacked from all sides by tens of thousands of Cossaks? I have faced charging Cossaks, and only the utmost superior firepower will stop them. In order to counter such an insane retreat, Hitler had to fire more than 30 generals within a few days.

It was then that he called on the Waffen SS to fill in the gap and boost morale. Immediately the SS held fast on the Moscow front. Right through the war the Waffen SS never retreated. They would rather die than retreat. One cannot forget the figures. During the 1941 winter, the Waffen SS lost 43,000 men in front of Moscow. The regiment Der Fuehrer fought almost literally to the last man. Only 35 men survived out of the entire regiment. The Der Fuehrer men stood fast and no Soviet troops got through. They had to try to bypass the SS in the snow. This is how famous Russian General Vlasov was captured by the Totenkopf SS division. Without their heroism, Germany would have been annihilated by December 1941.

Hitler would never forget it: he gauged the willpower that the Waffen SS had displayed in front of Moscow. They had shown character and guts. And that is what Hitler admired most of all: guts. For him, it was not enough to have intelligent or clever associates. These people can often fall to pieces, as we will see during the following winter at the battle of Stalingrad with General Paulus.

Hitler knew that only sheer energy and guts, the refusal to surrender, the will to hang tough against all odds, would win the war.

The blizzards of the Russian steppes had shown how the best army in the world, the German Army, with thousands of highly trained officers and millions of highly disciplined men, was just not enough. Hitler realized they would be beaten, that something else was needed, and that only the unshakable faith in a high ideal could overcome the situation. The Waffen SS had this ideal, and Hitler used them from now on at full capacity.

From all parts of Europe volunteers rushed to help their German brothers. It was then that was born the third great Waffen SS. First there was the German, then the Germanic, and now there was the European Waffen SS. 125,000 would then volunteer to save Western Culture and Civilization. The volunteers joined with full knowledge that the SS incurred the highest death tolls. More than 250,000 out of one million would die in action. For them, the Waffen SS was, despite all the deaths, the birth of Europe. Napoleon said in St. Helena: "There will be no Europe until a leader arises."

The young European volunteers have observed two things: first, that Hitler was the only leader who was capable of building Europe and secondly that Hitler, and Hitler alone could defeat the world threat of Communism.

For the European SS the Europe of petty jealousies, jingoism, border disputes, economic rivalries was of no interest. it was too petty and demeaning; that Europe was no longer valid for them. At the same time the European SS, as much as they admired Hitler and the German people, did not want to become Germans. They were men of their own people and Europe was the gathering of the various people of Europe. European unity was to be achieved through harmony, not domination of one over the others.

I discussed these issues at length with both Hitler and Himmler. Hitler like all men of genius had outgrown the national stage. Napoleon was first a Corsican, then a Frenchman, then a European and then a singularly universal man. Likewise Hitler had been an Austrian, then a German, then a greater German, then Germanic, then he had seen and grasped the magnitude of building Europe.

After the defeat of Communism the Waffen SS had a solemn duty to gather all their efforts and strength to build a united Europe, and there was no question that non-German Europe should be dominated by Germany.

Before joining the Waffen SS we had known very difficult conflicts. We had gone to the Eastern front first as adjunct units to the German army but during the battle of Stalingrad we had seen that Europe was critically endangered. Great common effort was imperative. One night I had an 8 hour debate with Hitler and Himmler on the status of non-German Europeans within the new Europe.

For the present we expected to be treated as equals fighting for a common cause. Hitler understood fully and from then on we had our own flag, our own officers, our own language, our own religion. We had total equal status.

I was the first one to have Catholic padres in the Waffen SS. Later padres of all demoninations were available to all those who wanted them. The Islamic SS division had their own mullahs and the French even had a bishop! We were satisfied that with Hitler, Europeans would be federated as equals. We felt that the best way to deserve our place as equals was in this critical hour to defend Europe equally well as our German comrades.

What mattered above all for Hitler was courage. He created a new chivalry. Those who earn the order of the Ritterkreuz, meaning the cross of the knights, were indeed the new knights. They earned this nobility of courage. Each of our units going home after the war would be the force that would protect the peoples' rights in our respective countries. All the SS understood that European unity meant the whole of Europe, even Russia.

There had been a great lack of knowledge among many Germans regarding the Russians. Many believed that the Russians were all Communists while in fact, Russian representation in the Communist hierarchy was less than insignificant. They also believed that the Russians were diametrically opposite from the Europeans. Yet they have similar familial structures, they have an old civilization, deep religious faith and traditions which are not unlike those of other European countries.

The European SS saw the new Europe in the form of three great components; central Europe as the power house of Europe, western Europe as the cultural heart of Europe and eastern Europe as the potential of Europe. Thus the Europe the SS envisioned was alive and real. Its six hundred million inhabitants would live from the North Sea to Vladivostok. It was in this span of 8,000 miles that Europe could achieve its destiny. A space for young people to start new lives. This Europe would be the beacon of the world. A remarkable racial ensemble. An ancient civilization, a spirtitual force and the most advanced technological and scientific complex. The SS prepared for the high destiny of Europe.

Compare these aims, these ideals with the "Allies." The Roosevelts, the Churchills sold Europe out in Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. They cravenly capitulated to the Soviets. They delivered half of the European continent to Communist slavery. They let the rest of Europe disintegrate morally, without any ideal to sustain it. The SS knew what they wanted: the Europe of ideals was salvation for all.

This faith in higher ideals inspired four hundred thousand German SS, three hundred thousand Volksdeutsche or Germanic SS and three hundred thousand other European SS. Volunteers all, one million builders of Europe.

The ranks of the SS grew proportionately with the growth of the war in Russia. The nearer Germany was to defeat the more volunteers arrived at the front. This was phenomenal; eight days before the final defeat I saw hundreds of young men join the SS on the front. Right to the end they knew they had to do the impossible to stop the enemy.

So from the one hundred and eighty-men strong Leibstandarte in 1933 to the SS regiments before 1939, to the three regiments in Poland, to the three divisions in France, to the six divisions at the beginning of the Russian war, to the 38 divisions in 1944, the Waffen SS reached 50 divisions in 1945. The more SS died, the more others rushed to replace them. They had faith and stood firm to the extreme limit, The exact reverse happened in January 1943 at Stalingrad. The defeat there was decided by a man without courage. He was not capable of facing danger with determination, of saying unequivocally: I will not surrender, I will stand fast until I win. He was morally and physically gutless and he lost.

A year later the SS Viking and the SS Wallonia divisions were encircled in the same way at Cherkassy. With the disaster of Stalingrad fresh in the minds of our soldiers they could have been subject to demoralization. On top of it I was laid down with a deep sidewound and 102 degree temperature. As general in command of the SS Wallonia forces I knew that all this was not conducive to high morale. I got up and for 17 days I led charge after charge to break the blockade, engaged in numerous hand-to-hand combats, was wounded four times but never stopped fighting. All my men did just as much and more. The siege was broken by sheer SS guts and spirit.

After Stalingrad, when many thought that all was lost, when the Soviet forces poured across the Ukraine, the Waffen SS stopped the Soviets dead in their tracks. They re-took Charkov and inflicted a severe defeat on the Soviet army. This was a pattern; the SS would over and over turn reverses into victories.

The same fearless energy was also present in Normandy. Gen. Patton called them "the proud SS divisions."

The SS was the backbone of resistance in Normandy. Eisenhower observed "the SS fought as usual to the last man."

If the Waffen SS had not existed, Europe would have been overrun entirely by the Soviets by 1944. They would have reached Paris long before the Americans. The Waffen SS heroism stopped the Soviet juggernaut at Moscow, Cherkov, Cherkassy, and Tarnopol. The Soviets lost more than 12 months. Without SS resistance the Soviets would have been in Normandy before Eisenhower. The people showed deep gratitude to the young men who sacrificed their lives. Not since the great religious orders of the middle ages had there been such selfless idealism and heroism. In this century of materialism, the SS stand out as a shining light of spirituality.

I have no doubt whatever that the sacrifices and incredible feats of the Waffen SS will have their own epic poets like Schiller. Greatness in adversity is the distinction of the SS.

The curtain of silence fell on the Waffen SS after the war but now more and more young people somehow know of its existence, of its achievements. The fame is growing and the young demand to know more. In one hundred years almost everything will be forgotten but the greatness and the heroism of the Waffen SS will be remembered. It is the reward of an epic.

Léon Degrelle.

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Asociación cultural “Amigos de Léon Degrelle”

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